

### What I learned:

- How to navigate an airport alone.
- Costa Rican culture and history.
- Refreshed on conversational Spanish.
  - How to lesson plan.
  - To embrace discomfort and grow from it.
- A lifestyle that is much different than the one I live in.
- How to communicate with kids and adults even if you both don't fully speak the same language.
  - Classroom management strategies.
- Mannerisms and norms of communities or cultures that differ from my own.
  - Traditions and celebrations in Quepos.
  - To recognize my own privilege.
- How to not only be present, but also involved for kids, adults, and other volunteers who rely on you.
  - Countless life lessons as a result of talking to community members.



### Motivation to Select This Project:

As an education major, I am always looking for new field placement experiences and opportunities to work with kids. It has always been a dream of mine to teach in a community that is different than the one I'm from; STEP offered the best opportunity for me to get that experience. This program gave me the chance to grow as both a teacher and a learner through an experience I could never get in the U.S.. I think the best learning comes from uncomfortable experiences; going to Costa Rica was scary and new to me, but allowed me to grow as a person, learner, and teacher in more ways than I can count.

# GVI Costa Rica

**Project Description:** I spent 2 weeks in Quepos, Costa Rica working in the childcare and teaching English programs. These programs consisted of lesson planning, working with kids and adults in the community, teaching English basics, meeting curriculum goals, and adventuring Costa Rica during our free time. All of the volunteers, consisting of people from all around the world, stayed in a house together that was very close to the community that we volunteered in. Aside from teaching kids and adults, I learned a lot about Costa Rican culture, the history of the community we worked in, and the ways of life of a community other than my own.



### Transformational Aspect:

- Showed me a new way of life.
- Kids and adults in the community taught me life lessons on a daily basis just through interaction.
- Made me recognize my privilege.
- Gave me motivation to return to this community and make more impacts, big or small.
- Navigated new spaces by myself like airports, hostels, shops in Quepos.

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**STEP Project Category:** Service Learning and Community Service

**STEP Faculty Member:** Martin Rottler

**Major:** English Education



### Favorite Part of Experience:

When I reflect on my favorite part about this program it falls back on two things: the people I volunteered with, and the kids/adults we worked with.

Participating in this program allowed me to volunteer with people all over the world. I learned about everyone's respective country, talked about our different experiences growing up, and got to know people I never would have met otherwise. The other volunteers accepted me with open arms as family and they made my experience unforgettable.

The kids and adults in the community changed my life. Just by getting to know them, they made me a better person and taught me more about life than I could ever teach them about English. They gave me a new way to look at life and overall made me appreciate every single day more than I used to. They taught me about love, perseverance, loyalty, happiness, and gratitude. These are lessons that I will never forget, and because the people in Quepos were so warm and welcoming, I couldn't have asked for a better experience.



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Second-year Transformational Experience Program